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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 000402

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TAGS: [ES](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR: PARLACEN MURDERS CONTINUE TO RESONATE

REF: A. GUATEMALA 348

[¶](#)B. GUATEMALA 375

[¶](#)C. GUATEMALA 403

Classified By: Ambassador Charles L. Glazer, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In the wake of the February 19 murders of three Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) deputies, and the subsequent apparent extrajudicial executions of four policemen implicated in the killings (per reftels), relations remain strained between the traditionally-cooperative administrations of El Salvador and Guatemala. GOES officials have called for close FBI involvement in the investigation, and have publicly expressed their lack of confidence in Guatemalan law enforcement officials' ability to bring to justice those responsible for the crimes. END SUMMARY.

[¶](#)2. (SBU) The charred bodies of ARENA PARLACEN deputies Eduardo d'Aubuisson, William Pichinte, and Jose Ramon Gonzalez Rivas, along with their driver Gerardo Ramirez, were found February 19, together with their burning automobile in a roadside farm near Villa Canales, approximately 20 miles south of Guatemala City (reftel A). February 22, four Guatemalan police officials were arrested in connection with the Salvadoran deputies' deaths, including Luis Arturo Herrera Lopez of the Organized Crime Unit of the elite Criminal Investigation Division (DINC), together with three DINC investigators (reftel B). According to one version of February 25 events, at least six masked attackers armed with silencer-equipped firearms entered the maximum-security El Boqueron Penitentiary at Cuilapa where the four police suspects were detained, and quickly forced their way through security and executed the four suspects (reftel C). (Note: The FBI is dedicating investigative personnel to conduct thorough interviews, collect new evidence, and analyze existing data, in order to ascertain what really happened. End note.)

[¶](#)3. (C) Salvadoran authorities applauded the apprehension of one of the at-large suspects in the case, Police Subinspector Marvin Roberto Contreras Natareno, but some are understandably fearful that he will likewise be liquidated prior to testifying. Minister of Public Security Rene Figueroa suggested that Contreras should be transferred to Salvadoran custody not only for safety's sake, but in order to avoid Contreras's being pressured to commit perjury in outlining the events of February 19. Legislative Assembly deputies across the political spectrum all decried reports that a Guatemalan judge might close the case in the wake of the defendants' deaths. Eduardo d'Aubuisson's brother, ARENA Legislative Assembly Deputy Roberto d'Aubuisson, expressed outrage at the deputies' and suspects' murders, and angrily warned President Berger not to place confidence in those now undertaking the investigation.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: While Salvadoran media continue to trumpet alleged longstanding links between Guatemalan police and criminal activity including narcotrafficking and crimes against tourists, Salvadoran authorities appear unanimous in sharing the GOG's enthusiasm for FBI involvement in the investigation. These shocking murders--gruesome even by Central American standards--have rattled El Salvador's political class, and somewhat cooled the normally-cordial relations between the two neighboring countries. Only a professional, thorough, and impartial investigation that brings those responsible to justice will restore Salvadoran confidence in the Berger administration, although it remains to be seen whether any such comprehensive process--especially one involving the FBI--may implicate additional individuals among Guatemala's security apparatus. END COMMENT.

Glazer